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"FRENCH FOR BEGINNERS" (RADIOVISION)--AN AUDIO-VISUAL LANGUAGE COURSE FOR THE FIRST YEAR OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL.

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A BASICALLY AUDIOLINGUAL BEGINNING FRENCH COURSE WAS BROADCAST BY THE BBC AND TAPED BY TEACHERS WHO USED IT IN CONJUNCTION WITH FILMSTRIPS TO SUPPLEMENT A REGULAR LANGUAGE COURSE. THIS METHOD, CALLED RADIOVISION, IS DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IN TERMS OF ITS OVERALL OPERATION, THE KINDS OF MATERIAL INCLUDED, AND THE VARIOUS METHODS AND TECHNIQUES USED BY THE TEACHER IN PRESENTING THE MATERIALS. SUCH ASPECTS OF THIS COURSE AS TIME SCHEDULES, CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENTS, EQUIPMENT, AND TAPE RECORDINGS ARE ALSO DESCRIBED AND EVALUATED. INTERSPERSED THROUGHOUT THE BULLETIN ARE COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM FROM TEACHERS AND OBSERVATIONS MADE BY THE SCHOOL BROADCASTING COUNCIL. THIS DOCUMENT APPEARED IN THE "BBC SCHOOL BROADCASTS BULLETIN." (SS)

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SCHOOL BROADCASTING COUNCIL FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM

FL 000 479

French for Beginners (radiovision)

March 1965 (Reprint November 1966)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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BBC RADIOVISION BROADCASTS

FRENCH FOR BEGINNERS

AN AUDIO-VISUAL LANGUAGE COURSE

FOR

THE FIRST YEAR OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

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NOTE: Information about the purchase of filmstrips, teachers' notes, and wall charts, and about tape recording arrangements can be found in the current Annual Programme of BBC School Broadcasts.

Reprinted December 1966

Preface to the 1966 reprinted edition

This Bulletin was first issued when French for Beginners had been on the air for less than half a year and the second year series, Allons-y!, was still in the planning stage.

French for Beginners is now in its third year of transmission without significant alteration and it continues to reach an even wider audience (over 2,000 sets of filmstrips have been bought). This radiovision series is taken by very considerably more schools than any previous radio series and, being a 'core' series, it is used much more regularly and purposefully; in very many schools it is used by a number of parallel first-year classes.

There are, of course, variations in the manner of its use. Like all other broadcasts, it is a tool for the individual teacher to manipulate, and like all good languages materials, it is planned to make such variations possible. In general, however, the pattern of handling remains very much as described in the Bulletin. To quote the conclusion of the review in Modern Languages in September 1966: 'There is perhaps too much material in the course at present but it can quite well be spread over four terms. The children like the pictures, which on the whole convey the meaning well. They are realistic drawings with some background and lend themselves to further exploitation in revision. They are a colourful focal point in the classroom and retain the pupils' interest. The voices on the sound track are pleasant and varied and again encourage imitation by the class. French for Beginners gives great opportunity for acting, miming, illustration on the blackboard, group work in general and self-expression.'

A problem which has exercised the minds of most teachers at some stage in the course is that of the time and method of introducing the printed or written word, and the associated one of homework. As the writer of the Modern Languages review says:

> 'We feel it is essential to set work, otherwise French is looked upon as not serious, compared with other subjects ... At first we gave drawing homework - e.g. illustrations of situations seen - followed up by oral questioning for which marks were given ... later on the children labelled the drawings, then they copied out dialogues and plays. We find learning from a written dialogue helps the retaining process and gives something tangible to hold on to.'

Not all teachers would agree with this, but it is a widely-held view which must be respected. One can only re-state the warning given in the teachers' notes for French for Beginners, that the written word should never be introduced so early as to affect pronunciation, nor in such a way as to create inhibitions to fluent speech by drawing attention to (often inaudible) variations in verb forms, agreements and other peculiarities of accidence.

While there has been little alteration in the broadcasts, there have been some developments related to the series since this Bulletin was issued in March 1965.

The first is that the series is now broadcast on Mondays instead of Fridays. This seemingly trivial change adds in effect almost a week to the time - never enough - available to work on it.

The second year of transmission brought considerable changes in the teachers' notes, notably a revised introduction and a set of practice drills suggested for the exploitation of the material of each lesson.

In 1966-7 a set of 31 coloured wall pictures (one for each lesson) was published to facilitate oral practice from pictures without recourse every time to the use of the projector, a piece of apparatus often in great demand.

Perhaps the most important development of all is the successful negotiations of the right of schools to keep tape recordings of French for Beginners (and of all other radiovision programmes) for three years instead of one year, i.e. for two full school years after the year in which the programme was broadcast. This is not only of benefit to the schools themselves. It has meant at the broadcasting end that plans can be made to rest the series without depriving schools if its use, and thus release air-space and resources for other ventures including an audio-visual German series for pupils beginning the language at 13. French for Beginners will accordingly be repeated in 1967-8, but not in the next two years.

Section 5 of this Bulletin, which in March 1965 dealt only with the provision of a second-year course after French for Beginners, has been rewritten to take account of the further provision of a third-year course from 1967-8.

FRENCH FOR BEGINNERS

An audio-visual French course for beginners
in secondary schools, introduced in 1964-5.

This bulletin describes the background to the provision of this new BBC series and the response to the material in the schools from its introduction in September 1964 to the end of January 1965.

1. INTRODUCTION

The change that has come about in method in language teaching in recent years has been reflected in the new emphasis given to the BBC school language broadcasts. In 1961, the School Broadcasting Council looked at French in the secondary school to see what especial help broadcasting could give to the secondary teachers with pupils beginning to learn the language. A little later the BBC School Broadcasting Department (Sound) became very interested in developments in overseas broadcasting where filmstrips were used with broadcasts in various subject fields. Radio-vision, as this was called, could be used as an aid to any subject which would benefit by the use of coloured pictures, easily manipulated in a filmstrip projector as a visual accompaniment to the broadcast material. Experimental programmes were broadcast in 1963-4 in Geography, History and the Visual Arts, and the School Broadcasting Council asked the BBC to mount in 1964-5 a radio-vision French course for beginners in the secondary school.

The proposed course entailed a year's series of broadcasts containing the material of the course for tape recording by schools which had previously ordered the filmstrips and the teachers' notes. In other words, an audio-visual language course would be provided; the immediate difference between this and other such courses being that the verbal material would be recorded by each individual school which had to purchase only the filmstrips and 'raw' tapes.

Such a course implied the provision of material forming the 'core' of classroom work. It implied that the classroom work would have to be devoted almost exclusively to the material provided and the teachers' notes would have to contain not only the scripts of the broadcast lessons but also practical help for teachers new to the audio-visual

method of teaching a language. The Council judged that there would be a sufficient number of schools provided, or ready to provide themselves, with the equipment necessary for the use of audio-visual material, and, more important, sufficient teachers of French ready to postpone the use of the grammar text book in order to give their pupils oral and aural skills from the very beginning, recognising that it is more important for pupils to speak simple French with fluency and confidence when they leave school than to know grammatical rules.

2. THE EXPERIMENT

The course, planned to begin in autumn 1964, was preceded by trials of ten experimental programmes. In autumn 1963 just over 50 schools in England, Scotland and Wales agreed to take part in an experiment lasting a term. Most of these schools in England and Wales were secondary modern, with a few comprehensive, grammar, and a few junior schools. The Scottish schools consisted of four senior secondary, one junior, and five primary schools.
While most of the classes using the programmes in secondary modern schools were the 'A' streams, five 'B' streams and two other streams took part in the experiment.

During the autumn term of 1963, the participating schools sent in reports on each of the ten programmes especially prepared for the experiment, noting the number of school lessons needed for the pupils to assimilate new material, and commenting on difficulties with equipment, on the verbal material, on the filmstrip pictures and on the teachers' notes, and in general giving an evaluation of the course. At the same time, the modern language specialist Education Officers of the Council visited the schools, sent in their own reports, and held briefing meetings at the start of the term with the teachers and further 'progress' meetings at half term.

All this evidence dealt entirely with the material, its presentation and the problems of handling it. It enabled the BBC to prepare the final course, but there was no attempt to judge the value of the audio-visual approach as compared with other methods.

The evidence from the experiment underlined the need for a reduction of material in each programme, for the minimum of ambiguity in the pictures, and for careful attention to such detail as the phonic components of sentences. Finally, it highlighted the importance of the teacher's understanding of the principles and methods of the audio-visual language approach.

The response to the experimental programmes in the schools was such that it was concluded that it would be right to mount a broadcast series designed on similar lines.

Naturally, in order to judge the potential value of the course, teachers needed to have some acquaintance with the material; and so in the summer of 1964 the School Broadcasting Council's Education Officers introduced it and talked about audio-visual language methods at meetings sponsored by local education authorities up and down the country. There were over forty meetings in all and some five thousand language teachers, organizers and inspectors attended them; as users of other audio-visual courses were present, there was often discussion on the merits of the principles involved with the unconverted as well as on the relative merits and different characteristics of the various courses now available.

On Friday 25th September 1964 at 10.45 a.m. some thousand secondary schools set their radios and tape recorders going to 'capture' the first broadcast of French for Beginners. In England and Wales over half of these were modern schools and the remainder were grammar schools together with some comprehensive and bilateral schools. In Scotland there were 36 senior secondary, seven junior and seven primary schools.

3. THE NATURE OF FRENCH FOR BEGINNERS

A novel feature, for teachers in this country, about this new audio-visual course is the tape recording of broadcasts which the school has to arrange. However, schools which unavoidably miss any particular lesson can purchase a tape of the required broadcast (see current Annual Programme for details).

The aim is to approach the learning of the foreign tongue initially through the one skill which is usually so neglected in traditional methods, namely through speech, learning first to understand the language aurally and then use it orally. The methods of achieving this aim are based on the following principles:-

(1) The pupils, from the very start, have to follow, understand and use French spoken by natives at roughly normal speed.

(2) The verbal material of the broadcast is grounded in basic French vocabulary and structures introduced systematically throughout all the lessons of the course.

(3) The verbal material provides pauses for the pupils to repeat phrases; pauses which allow enough time for repetition at the correct speed.

(4) Pictures on filmstrip aid the comprehension of new material to which they are strictly related, focus attention on the subject in hand, and provide exploitation material for the teacher.

(5) The printed word is not introduced in the course, and teachers are advised only to introduce it when pronunciation is well fixed.

(6) The teacher will proceed, excluding the mother tongue as much as possible, from the introduction of new material to its comprehension, from comprehension to complete assimilation and eventually to its meaningful use by <u>varied</u> exploitation and revision in the classroom. It is the process of assimilation and direct use which is at the root of learning, and not a set of rules.

(7) Dependent on the last point, the teacher must have reasonable fluency and accent, and understand thoroughly how the course is to be used, for no course has magical qualities to whose mere exposure young people are 'brainwashed' into chattering in French in a meaningful way.

<u>French for Beginners</u> is not only the first BBC venture in a year-long audio-visual language course for schools; it is also the first BBC modern language series designed specifically for first year pupils beginning French in the secondary school.

The material is embodied in 'situations' geared to the interest of the age group, as well as the needs of the language course. Thus, instead of repeated structures with slightly varying vocabulary based on one simple action, new structures in the BBC course are presented within the framework of a 'real life' situation, and extra drills are left to the teacher to use with the tape recording as he or she judges fit. Grammar and vocabulary, which in the thirty-one broadcasts for the year's course amounts to approximately five hundred words, are based partly on 'Le Francais Fondamental'.

Thus a typical broadcast, designed on an average for work in a week of five thirty-minute classroom lessons, is made up as follows:-

<u>Part 1 of the broadcast</u>

(a) The material is introduced in the situation. (e.g. broadcast 2 'Le Petit Dejeuner'. The Dupont family at breakfast). The situation is played straight through with only sufficient pauses to turn on the filmstrip.

(b) The material is spoken again using the same filmstrip as in 1(a); this time an interval is left after each phrase for the pupils to imitate what they hear and then the phrase is repeated a second time with another pause for pupil repetition.

Part 2. Questions and Answers

(a) A series of questions and answers on the situation introduced in Part 1(a) are given.

(b) The same questions and answers are repeated with intervals for two repetitions, as in Part 1(b), so that the pupils have practice in obtaining question intonation and formulating questions as well as that of ordinary statements. The same filmstrip as for Part 2(a) is used again.
(From broadcast 18 there is no second repetition in Part 2(b).)

There is one signal to indicate when the filmstrip should be turned to the next frame and another to indicate when the strip should be returned to the first frame in each part.

Part 3

The situation is acted in radio drama style with sound effects. There is no visual material for this section which is meant to be used when the pupils have done the hard initial work of assimilation, and it is hoped it will encourage dramatic work in the classroom. In earlier broadcasts, where the situation material is naturally limited, extra verbal material on the situation is introduced, as in broadcast 2 where the game of 'C'est vrai ou c'est faux?' is included.

Most of the broadcasts, which introduce new material, follow this pattern, while others such as Nos. 5, 8, 11, 12 revise or consolidate, introducing perhaps a song. A broadcast such as No.19 is a miscellany programme designed to add variety, using the particular resources and virtues of radio.

The thirty-one colour filmstrips which accompany the broadcasts contain simple pictures as unambiguous as it is possible to be without using matchstick men, arrows, and balloons for 'before' and 'after' treatment and thoughts. It is thought that coloured pictures are most suitable for a first-year course because it is possible to control effectively the amount of detail required. Distracting detail can be eliminated while sufficient can be retained to provide authenticity and reality. The colour technique used has enabled the artist, where desirable, to highlight essential characters and objects in the foreground and to 'soften' the background.

The last of the course material to be mentioned is the very comprehensive teachers' booklet containing:

(1) Notes on the audio-visual method.

(2) Notes on handling the material.

(3) Content and form of broadcasts.

(4) Advice on classroom arrangements.

(5) For each broadcast

(a) The new structures with suggestions for their introduction and use.
(b) List of new vocabulary.
(c) Text of the lesson.
(d) Suggested oral practices for establishing the new material.

(6) Vocabulary index.

These notes are extremely important and need to be well digested by the teacher before he or she sets the tape of the first broadcast rolling and directs the eyes of the pupils to the first filmstrip.

4. FRENCH FOR BEGINNERS IN THE SCHOOLS

"Once upon a time there was a young language teacher, Mr. Chevalier, who had just been appointed to his first post at Nonpareil Secondary Modern School. Bearing his recent training in mind and determined to make French lessons audially and visually exciting for his new charges, he paid a visit to Nonpareil, set in smiling green playing fields, early in his last summer term as a teacher-in-training, in order to discuss arrangements with his very accommodating headmaster, Mr. Sanspeur, and his deputy, Mr. Sansreproche. The former was especially happy that he could add French to the timetable and was prepared to meet his new young assistant master more than halfway.

'Mr. Sanspeur, I should like to use an audio-visual French language course with IA. I rather fancy this BBC course.'

'Certainly, we'll order what you like, Chevalier, and in good time.'

'About the timetable, could I have five thirty-minute periods with IA, preferably one each day, second period each morning?'

'Well, that may be difficult: as you know, Mr. Sansreproche, here, drew up the timetable long ago, but I think he can do a little

re-arranging and put some of IA's Chemistry late on Thursday and Friday afternoons and their R.I. can be reduced to one period if need be.'

'Thank you very much, sir. There's one thing more; I notice with delight that the school has a screen, a good tape recorder, even an extension speaker, an excellent filmstrip projector, and I hear your secretary is expert at taping BBC broadcasts from our bright new VHF set in her office, but I think IA's form room is quite unsuitable. I don't need all those desks as they restrict ease of movement which is so necessary for the varied work of the development of a typical audio-visual course broadcast: bags of acting and all that - or so my lecturer at coll., Mr. Saitout, always maintained. And then I need some form of partial blackout, to create a discreet gloom - venetian blinds are very good. I mean to say, sir, is there an empty room with thirty chairs, a blackboard and venetian blinds which I can use solely for the audio-visual lessons so that all the equipment can stay put too?'

'Now I come to think of it, Chevalier, there is that room quietly hidden away from the main classroom block for which we've never been able to think of a suitable use - you can have it; it's got blinds, too, now I know why the architect put them in!'

'Thanks, sir, I'll move in my equipment straight away.'

'It's good to see them so keen!' beamed Mr. Sanspeur at Mr. Sansreproche as the latter started to peer at the timetable board, eraser in hand and enthusiasm in eye."

The decision to use an audio-visual course means, as our fairy tale shows, some considerable preparation and thought with ordering the material, timetabling, equipment and the classroom before even the teacher starts to think of the broadcasts themselves.

(1) <u>Timetabling</u>

It cannot be too often stated that such an approach to language teaching requires constant repetition of the material, in various guises, and this means that a lesson a day is the ideal timetable allotment. It is far better to have five thirty-minute periods than four forty-minute ones, and certainly four forty-minute periods are better than two double periods a week.

It is probable that a large number of schools are not yet able to have this daily lesson. This situation is sometimes made worse when a 'blank' day falls on a Monday or Friday so that there are three

consecutive days in every seven when no French is taught. This certainly makes the teacher's task an uphill one in every way, not only because French for Beginners is designed, in general, for an allocation of five thirty-minute periods for each weekly broadcast, but also because the 'daily dose' of French is vital for assuring the least painful way for the assimilation of the material.

An example of the situation which exists is shown by the following figures from twenty-six secondary schools using the course in one region of the country.

	No. of periods a week				
	5	4	3	2	1
No. of schools	9	8	5	3	1

Total no. of schools 26, out of which nine had a special room for French for Beginners lessons.

(2) Special classroom

The special classroom may seem a luxury, but without one there is an inordinate amount of time spent packing up and setting up equipment at the end and beginning of lessons; and when not being used for audio-visual purposes it is of course used for other teaching purposes like any other classroom. Where this cannot be provided, other measures have to be put into operation to avoid time wasting: thus in one school an Education Officer of the Council found the teacher 'had devised a system of pupil helpers who can now do the job (i.e. setting up the equipment) in two minutes, and all Mr. _____ has to do is to switch on the electricity.'

(3) Equipment

The Council's Education Officers have in visiting schools found a fair proportion where there is a special room for the audio-visual course but where the tape recorder has to be shared with other departments in the school so that difficulties inevitably arise. Schools using the course naturally have at least the minimum equipment necessary but it is the quality of the performance which matters. Faulty strip holders fray the temper. Adequate images of the pictures are obtained where a well-maintained projector and a good screen are used; projection on non-white walls in poor black-out conditions does not give a clear picture.

(4) Tape recording

The quality of the tape recording is of vital importance: if the pupils do not hear every word clearly, then nothing is achieved and the teacher has to do all the repetition of the script. Faulty recording is the Achilles heel of the course and was the reason for most of the letters sent to headquarters of the School Broadcasting Council in London in the first term of the broadcasts from teachers who had found it impossible to make a recording at the time of the broadcast.

Tape recording situations fall into three categories:

(a) where recordings are bad and teachers wish to do something about it;

as distinct from

(b) where teachers do not realise how bad their recordings are;

and

(c) where teachers have good recordings.

It is sad to learn that recordings are still made sometimes by the placing of the microphone in front of the radio speaker where it picks up all external noises inside and outside the classroom as well as the broadcast (instead of by connecting the tape recorder directly to the radio by joining the radio output socket to the tape recorder input socket by lead so that only the sounds of the broadcast are recorded). It is on the other hand encouraging to read about many examples of technical know how and efficiency observed by the Council's Education Officers:

> '... A first class recording was used, made and reproduced on a sparkling new recorder through an extension speaker. The picture image was clean and bright on a beaded screen in an adequately blacked out room.'
>
> '... the rooms are fitted as audio-visual rooms, and all the first years are being started on the BBC material ... The recording of the programme was good, played through a recorder and extension speaker; a boy worked the daylight projector ...'

In fact, of all the comments made in the autumn term of 1964 by the Council's Education Officers about the quality of tape recordings they had heard, exactly one-half were said to be good, one-quarter were fair and one-quarter bad.

(5) Classroom arrangements

The problem that arises with the equipment is the need to place and work two pieces of apparatus (tape recorder and projector) while being free to point to a third (the screen). Most schools have solved the problem very adequately by using pupils (on a rota) to work the projector at the back of the room, leaving the teacher free to stand at the front behind the tape recorder and beside the screen. Some pupils even work the tape recorder which is perfectly possible when simply starting and stopping is required, but it is rare for large sections of the tape to be played through at a time, and the teacher normally has to go back frequently to replay a sequence of sentences or repeat the repetitions of a difficult phrase. It has been noticed that teachers have learnt the value of the pause button and certain tricks to find the required place easily. Some teachers have made careful preparation (suggested in the teachers' booklet) in noting against each section of the script the tape footage number. If this is not done it is sometimes disconcerting, having whisked back the tape in the hope that the approximate place will be found, to find oneself in the closing minutes of Intermediate German which is broadcast and recorded immediately before French for Beginners.

With such language work, desks are rarely required and schools which have large rooms and small classes so that desks can be pushed aside leaving space for movement by teacher and pupils are very lucky. On the other hand, the teacher whose classroom is so crammed with desks that he or she cannot move easily from one pupil to another to hear individuals during choral repetitions is indeed unfortunate. It is disturbing when one does eventually get to the back of the class to find the last row has been chanting impeccably 'Que c'est Colette?' instead of 'Que fait Colette?', or 'Papa voit café' instead of 'Papa boit l'café'.

(6) The lesson material of French for Beginners

It can be said at the outset that the evidence shows the course to have had a favourable reception in the classroom. The picture in the first months of the course is one of French teachers grappling, some with marked success and others with considerably less, with the problems entailed in adopting what for a number is a completely new approach in French teaching. Outright condemnation and wholesale criticism are extremely rare, while approval has been expressed by many of the users. An example of comment made about the series is:

> A head teacher of a secondary modern school using an audio-visual course for the first time 'after six false starts with different textbooks', found the method and course to be just what he was looking for.

The response from two secondary modern schools using the material with 'C' streams is also encouraging:

> 'The headmaster was very excited about the course: he said the most noticeable effect was the enthusiasm with which the children had been responding. He was particularly pleased with the progress of the 'C' stream who often pronounced the French better than their more able comrades.'
>
> 'Mrs. A. is particularly pleased with the 'C' stream, who are keeping up.'

Situations with good strong actions have been singled out for special mention and the idea of having a radio dramatisation in the third part of the lesson has met with general approval.

(a) The filmstrip pictures

The style of some pictures, notably those of the song in broadcasts 5 and 8 has been considered 'delightful' (and with justice). Some teachers have concurred with the following view that '... at first I thought them rather amateurish in style ... but I and my pupils quickly got used to them.' On the other hand, another teacher said it was only adults who argued about the drawings; the pupils accepted them quite happily.

What is of major importance is the help the pictures give in aiding comprehension. The teacher whose comments on the pictures are given first in the above paragraph, went on to add that the expressions and features were perfectly adequate for the purpose, and this has been a common opinion, despite some criticisms of points of detail on some of the individual pictures.

No picture, whether it be the 'natural' style of the BBC course, or the 'cartoon' style of other courses can be entirely unambiguous, especially where abstract concepts are involved. An advantage of the 'natural' style is that the material can be exploited more easily in further classroom work.

(b) The verbal material

Speech: While any indistinct speech is normally due to poor quality of the tape recording of the broadcast, sometimes French spoken at natural speed in the audio-visual method context has caused initial difficulty. The elision of the sound where the French do not always give, for example, the definite article its full value in speech in such sentences as 'Papa boit le café', makes for difficulties, for the pupils have to realise that a 'le' exists even if it is hardly pronounced,

and it is only fair to say that perhaps in one or two cases the speech is just a shade 'too natural' and gives the teacher problems which always arise once the elusive sound is emphasised to show its existence.

The Material The number of words introduced in the year is some 500, of which some 250 were introduced during the autumn term in the 'situation' method requiring a rapid build up of vocabulary.

Teachers have commented on the amount of new 'grammar' or 'structures' in some of the lessons such as broadcast 6 which introduces the 'ma, ta, sa'; the possessive use of 'de'; 'il s'appelle' and 'comment s'appelle ...?' plus the new vocabulary. 'Too much grammar involved in this lesson,' said one teacher, and this was echoed by others who said their classes were having difficulty in keeping up.

Pace: The last sentence brings up the question of pace. This has varied enormously from school to school with, of course, the variations in class streams and the amount of time given; and the various lessons reached at Christmas 1964 by the twenty-six schools mentioned in paragraph 4(1) above are as follows:

No. of broadcast lesson reached by end of autumn term 1964	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
No. of Schools	1	1	3	3	2	1	5	4	6

Remarks such as: 'class falling behind with new structures', 'finding it difficult to maintain the pace', 'need for more time for individuals to get greater fluency', suggest that some teachers are working to some set pace, presumably the broadcasting dates of the programmes.

It is not, in fact, suggested that each broadcast's material has to be assimilated and dealt with in one week before the next broadcast. However, some teachers have attempted to do this to the detriment of sufficient 'ingraining' of the material. Progress at first will inevitably be slow with beginners, and with teachers for the first time coming to grips with the course; time can be made up in revision broadcasts and later in the year. The fact that the course is based on the assumption that broadcast material is sufficient on the average for five daily class periods has to be looked at over the year as a whole and not taken to mean that the rule is one broadcast a week. The pace can only be dictated by the progress of each group of pupils learning French by the method.

Noting that in one school the young teacher was still on broadcast lesson 3 in the middle of November, one of the Council's Education Officers, after emphasising the lively handling of the material, said, 'It showed unusual sagacity to be only on Lesson 3 and not to care.'

(7) Handling of the material in the classroom

The importance of a high quality tape recording was stressed above. But the most vital consideration is the handling of the material in the classroom by the teacher. The skill and the ability of the teacher are, as always, the crucial factors which determine whether new material or a new method is of value in a particular classroom.

In the simplest possible terms the handling of the material of an audio-visual course resolves itself into four main processes:

(a) Comprehension of the new sounds with the aid of the pictures.

(b) The imitation of those sounds by the pupils and complete assimilation.

(c) The use of the new knowledge in question and answer drills, games etc., which lead to

(d) The use of French in as near a 'natural' living situation as possible.

This is not to say that with each new lesson one proceeds doggedly from (1) to (2) and from (2) to (3) etc. in slow grinding steps. The very full teachers' notes which accompany the filmstrips and which contain the scripts of each broadcast have helped teachers who have studied them to be sharply aware of the following points:

(i) As with all teaching, variety in every classroom period is vital.

(ii) Pupil participation beyond the mere choral and individual repetition and answering of questions put by the teacher is essential. The teachers' notes have this interesting comment: 'The audio-visual course only provides static visual associations. These cannot be as strong as those which include movement, and ones in which the pupil is personally involved.'

(iii) There is constant need to mingle old material with the new.

(iv) The elimination of the mother tongue as far as possible is important - one so often gives oneself a centimetre and takes a kilometre.

(v) The equipment does not have to be used every minute of the lesson or every single lesson.

(vi) It is necessary to proceed at the classes' own speed of assimilation (though at the speed of speech of the broadcast), and constantly to check individual comprehension as well as pronunciation.

Most of these points are nothing more than the expression of the good teacher's normal practice and skill in the classroom, brought very sharply into focus by the special character of an audio-visual language course. Many teachers have become well acquainted with them before using the series as a result of attending courses in audio-visual methods organised by their local education authorities. The following examples of classroom use observed by some of the School Broadcasting Council's Education Officers reflect some of these points:

Example 1 - Class 1B of a bilateral school

Broadcast lesson 6 - the second period of the week devoted to this broadcast, and only Part 1 had been used.

Stages of the classroom lesson

(1) Pictures of Part 1 viewed again - individuals put questions with individual and chorused replies.

(2) Listen to Part 2.

(3) Class repeats Part 2 - extremely good 'attack'. Check on individual responses. Practised 'Sa montre est cassée' several times, using 'stylo' in place of 'montre' on occasion.

(4) Questions on pictures of Part 2.

(5) Practice with 'content(es)(s)'.

(6) Singing of song of broadcast 5.

(7) Pupils' acted version of 'Le petit déjeuner' (broadcast 2) - interesting to note they inserted their own conversation, such as 'Où est ma règle?' 'Elle est sous la chaise'.

(8) Class dismissed in French.

Example 2 - A first year unstreamed class in a secondary modern school

In this lesson, the teacher did not use the tape or filmstrip at all, but based his work on material already learnt, the class having covered broadcasts 1 - 3 of French for Beginners.

Stages of the classroom lesson

(1) A song.

(2) 'Qui' questions.

(3) Actions to be performed e.g. 'Touchez la tête!'

(4) 'Que faites vous?' and 'Qu'est-ce que c'est?' practice. This included a lot of practical work and some good display of technique. For example, the teacher ordered two boys 'Prenez la chaise', but they could not answer the question 'Que faites-vous?', so he had a third boy give the orders and put the question to him (the teacher).

The Education Officer who saw this was impressed by the more than usual attention given to the weaker pupils by the teacher, who 'seemed to pull all his rabbits out of the hat without effort', working at high pressure, speaking fast and expecting quick answers.

Example 3 - An 'A' stream class of a mixed bilateral school.

A revision of broadcast lesson 4.

Stages of the classroom lesson

(1) Repeat of Part 1 - frequent stopping of the tape for individual checks; excellent "attack" and the teacher's manipulation of the recorder to get back to a phrase was brilliant.

(2) Using a boy and a girl at the front of the class, the teacher practised 'prêt' and 'prête', in the broadcast 'situation'.

(3) Exercises with a clock, emphasising 'presque' with time.

(4) Taking a glove, satchel and pencil, the teacher practised 'derrière', 'sous', 'sur'.

(5) 'Meunier, tu dors' sung.

(6) Back to the tape for the question section; the pupils had to give the answers before the tape replied.

The children in these classes were not obliged to spend a period of thirty minutes sitting still, staring at the pictures and chanting in unison; physical movement, acting, individual replies, pupils' questions, all helped to maintain interest. This calls for particular emphasis, for while audio-visual methods can enlist the enthusiam and sustain the interest of pupils, they can be deadly boring if not employed in the right way. Teachers have confessed to the improvement of their own acting skills in their efforts to avoid using English, and the abstract words seemingly impossible to explain without the use of the mother tongue can sometimes be put over after thought and inspiration as the teacher did who played his tape at double the correct speed, saying 'C'est trop vite' and his pupils understood the meaning of 'trop' right away.

Attention is especially drawn to the mention of good 'attack' and the necessity for keeping up the children's rate of speech, and to the point made in Example 3 above of the teacher finding the place on the tape to repeat sentences and phrases. If the teacher does too much repetition himself, there is a tendency for speech to slow up, however wary he may be, and if his own French pronunciation is defective in parts, it is his accent and not that of the native speakers on the tape which the pupils imitate.

Full assimilation of the material reaps its own reward, as was noted at a recent meeting of teachers using the series. Several teachers expressed amazement at the amount of French their pupils had retained, despite the Christmas holidays, when classes were resumed in January.

As for reading and writing, these skills have hardly come into the picture up to the time of writing this account. It has been noted that some teachers have felt unable to refrain from introducing the written word, if only 'for the keeping of vocabularies'. This would suggest that the assimilation of the material had not been completed. Other teachers have worried because homework is difficult to set until the written word both for reading and writing has been introduced, and there may be a need for some sort of 'mark' for French in the end of term examinations. Oral tests can be devised; they need considerable lesson time to conduct though, as marks are awarded at the time of the performance; against this, however, can be set the saving of time taken to mark examination papers. Schools which have a French assistant could ask him to give the beginners such an oral test.

One last comment on the progress of the series in autumn 1964, and on the outstanding skill of a teacher comes from Wales, from a comprehensive school which had taken part in the BBC experiment in 1963. The particular class was the sixth stream of an eight stream first year entry:

> 'She had dispensed completely with English from the beginning of the second week ... There was excellent response, good individual work, and impromptu dramatisation of lessons 3 and 4 ... Towards the end of the period, we had a five minute sketch based on 'Le Salon' ... I have not before come across such ease in the fifth week of learning French on the part of pupils in the handling of the language.'

The Council's Education Officer who noted this also had the opportunity of seeing the work of a second year form which had started French with the BBC experimental programmes in autumn 1963. He commented:

> 'Again the whole lesson was handled in French and it consisted of reading, comprehension, and general conversation ... a tremendous improvement was seen in the free composition work done by the class. The teacher told me that never before in her experience had she known a class really asking to be allowed to write essays in French'

and stressed that the written work in the second year had been enhanced by the use in the first year of the audio-visual method with its deliberate emphasis on initial oral fluency.

5. SECOND AND THIRD YEAR COURSES

Allons-y! was introduced in 1965-6, following many requests from teachers, as a second-year successor to French for Beginners. It is an audio-visual course, narrative pictures being presented in black-and-white strip form in a pupils' pamphlet. Phrases, repeated with pauses, are given for each picture (the text of these being printed separately at the end of the pamphlet), and the remainder of the fifteen minutes is given over to a dramatization of the episode. Teachers' notes give a summary of the episode, information about structures and vocabulary, and a very considerable choice of oral drills. The actual text of the dramatization is not given. The episodes have a more adult flavour than those of French for Beginners, and are set in a local newspaper office, which gives opportunity for a wide variety of incidents for much repetition and for the use of both direct and reported speech in different tenses.

Inevitably Allons-y! in use presents a much more varied picture than French for Beginners, since it reflects the varied aims and methods of teachers in different schools with second-year classes. It should also be noted that Allons-y! had to be produced in place of Early Stages in French, a well established

'enrichment' series with an audience of around 800 schools, Allons-y! was therefore given the difficult task of providing a series which could replace Early Stages for 'supporting' use and at the same time offer the basis of a week's work to those schools wishing to carry on the French for Beginners approach for another year. In the circumstances, reactions have been generally favourable, despite some criticisms of speed and difficulty. It has very frequently been taken with third-year classes, and teachers specialising in oral work for CSE and other purposes have found it useful at even higher levels.

One early difficulty which presented itself was that not all schools managed to complete French for Beginners within the one year and were thus faced with a discouraging back-log of Allons-y! tapes to use when they finally started the series. To remedy this in 1966-7 the first seven broadcasts of Allons-y! were re-written to contain only linguistic material found in the later stages of French for Beginners; they can thus serve as revision for those who finish the first year up to date and be regarded as expendable by those who do not.

With the material provided it is still, however, an exacting task for the teacher to make Allons-y! the whole basis of his work for the year, and plans are in hand to provide a pupil's course book which should facilitate the 'core' use of this series.

Plans for 1967-8 also include a new third-year series, Nous Voici. This will be particularly addressed to those who have followed French for Beginners and Allons-y!, and like those series, will introduce vocabulary and structures in a carefully graded progression. It will aim especially to extend pupils' ability to understand and use both spoken and written French, and to give children a lively sense of France and its culture.